

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD), a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee and the only member from Maryland, announced that the House of Representatives today passed the Fiscal Year 2007 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill which included \$15.4 million for Baltimore Harbor maintenance dredging and \$13.1 million for the Poplar Island Project.

“The Port of Baltimore is a significant economic engine for our state and as a member of the Appropriations Committee, I am pleased that I have been able to work for the past several years to ensure that the Congress maintains its long-standing commitment to the Baltimore Harbor,” Hoyer said. “The Harbor presently supports nearly 126,000 jobs in the State of Maryland and generates more than \$1.4 billion for the State and regional economies.”

“As we are faced with heightened security concerns at our nation’s major ports, it is essential to make certain that points of entry like the Baltimore Harbor are maintained, ensuring their continued viability,” Hoyer added.

The Army Corps of Engineers will receive \$15.4 million for work on the Baltimore Harbor, to continue its dredging of approximately 2.5 million cubic yards of material annually to maintain the deep channels in the Baltimore District each year so that large shipping vessels boats can navigate the channels.

In addition, the Poplar Island Beneficial Use Project will benefit from \$13.1 million in funding. This is in addition to the more than \$148 million Hoyer has helped secure for Poplar Island over the past nine years. This project, which has helped the Army Corps address the critical issue of disposal of dredge materials from the Baltimore Harbor, is also the largest environmental restoration project undertaken by the Army Corps of Engineers. Poplar Island was recently on the verge of disappearing, but is today a national model for habitat restoration and the beneficial use of dredged material. When completed, an 1100-acre wildlife sanctuary, including wetlands and bird nesting habitats, will have been created. The total federal cost of the project is estimated at \$254 million. Construction began in 1998 and the project is expected to be completed by 2020.

“I am pleased to support a project that has turned the dredge spoils from the Baltimore Harbor into a wildlife sanctuary for many species of wildlife native to the Chesapeake, including eagles, osprey, heron, egret, and the diamondback terrapin,” concluded Hoyer.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for maintaining the federal channels used by ships and watermen in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, including the Baltimore Harbor. The dredge materials are barged to Poplar Island where over time, it will help to restore the island.

*The Senate must now pass the Fiscal Year 2007 Energy and Water Appropriations Act and the differences between the two bills must be reconciled in a House-Senate Conference Committee before the bill can become law.*

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